



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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For Immediate Release
Wednesday, October 6, 2004

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Baucus OFAC Amendment Passes with Intel Reform Bill

Cuba Travel Ban Opponent Calls for Threat-based Allocation of Treasury Resources

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus' amendment directing the Treasury Department to abide by new criteria for allocating resources in the war on terrorism passed the Senate today along with an intelligence reform bill.

Baucus, (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, joined with Intelligence Committee chairman, Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho) in successfully attaching an amendment to the National Intelligence Reform Act calling on the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, to abide by new criteria for allocating resources and report to Congress on its progress every year.

"OFAC is one of our most powerful weapons in the War on Terrorism because it is charged with tracking down and identifying the international sources of terrorist financing," Baucus stated in a speech on the Senate floor.

However, Baucus noted, the Cuba travel ban also falls under OFAC's jurisdiction, which includes monitoring of U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba.

"OFAC diverts more of its personnel resources to imposition of the Cuba travel ban than to any other country or project-specific issue," said Baucus. "If we hope to defeat the disparate threats arrayed against U.S. interests – both here at home and abroad – we must dedicate our attention to the real dangers confronting us around the world."

Earlier this year, Baucus and Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) teamed up to investigate OFAC's overall effectiveness. The Finance Committee investigation revealed OFAC dedicates more resources to enforcing the Cuba travel ban than it does squeezing off terrorists financial networks.

Currently, OFAC dedicates the equivalent of 21 full-time OFAC employees are allocated to the Cuba travel ban, while only 16 people are assigned to the search for Al-Qaeda's financial sources of support.

Baucus said his amendment outlines threat-based criteria that ought to be used when allocating OFAC resources to different countries and groups including:

- * Planning or sponsoring a direct attack on U.S. interests
- * Participating in a nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons development program;
- * Financing or allowing the financing of terrorists;
- * Providing a safe haven to terrorists

"My amendment simply asks for common sense in the allocation of our limited resources," said Baucus. "We cannot expect to win the War on Terrorism if we refuse to dedicate our full and focused efforts to fighting it. As we all know, U.S. policy toward Cuba is a highly emotional and divisive issue," Baucus said. "Still, I would doubt that anyone seriously thinks that travel by Americans to Cuba poses a larger or more serious threat to U.S. interests than Al-Qaeda or the insurgents in Iraq, or Syria, Iran or North Korea."

S. 2845, the National Intelligence Reform Act, overwhelmingly passed the Senate today and will now proceed to conference where differences between the House and Senate version will be reconciled.

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